

**Testimony in support of
MSDE – Public Library Grant Program
A Hearing before the Senate Budget and Tax Committee -
Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 9, 2010**

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Senators:

On behalf of all Maryland public libraries, I want to thank you for your unanimous approval to establish the Public Library Capital Grant Program in 2006. Although the General Assembly approved \$5 million for the project, that amount was cut to \$2.5 million in FY 2008, the first year of the project, and cut 20% in FY 09. We received full funding in 2010.

The Governor's FY 2011 budget includes the full \$5 million. These funds, which require local matching funds, are critical in helping libraries address a backlog of renovation and construction needs. The need for this program is evidenced by the level of application. In FY 2011, the Division of Library Development and Services, MSDE received over \$7.9 million in requests for Public Library Capital Grant Program funding. During the first three years of the program, 19 counties received \$11 million dollars to renovate and build libraries, all of which was at least matched by local dollars. Matching funding for all FY 11 approved projects has been certified by local governments. **Even in difficult economic times, this program is doing exactly what you envisioned. This is a true State/County partnership.**

To give you one example of the success of these grants, for 28 years, the roof on the Westminster Branch of Carroll County Public Library (CCPL) leaked regularly. In 2008, CCPL received \$135,000 in FY 2008 Public Library Capital Grant funds to begin renovation of the Westminster Library. As the local match, the County decided to put a new roof on the library. **This expenditure far exceeded the required local match.** In addition, County bureau of facilities staff replaced the windows damaged by roof leaks. In FY 09, CCPL received \$437,000 for phase two of the renovation. The County not only funded the match, but also County staff did a significant amount of the work. For example, county electricians did the labor to upgrade the entire electrical system as an in-kind contribution beyond the local cash match. These improvements to the heavily used (300,000 visits per year) and hard working 23,000 sq. ft. branch will prepare the library for the next 30 years of service. Everyone is proud of the significant renovation work that has been accomplished through this partnership.

Looking at the state as a whole, there are 174 public library branches in Maryland or one library for every 31,943 citizens. Most of these libraries were built at least 30 years ago. Many are well over 40 years old. These well-loved buildings are in need of renovation and repair. Most have inadequate space to meet the current demands for service, including the demand for computer access. Through this important capital funding program, county libraries throughout Maryland have been able to leverage local dollars to plan for and make significant library building improvements.

Maryland citizens love and use their libraries. In FY 2008, citizens made **33 million visits to public libraries in Maryland and usage continues to grow**. During this economic downturn, libraries throughout the state are filled with job seekers writing resumes, applying for jobs and using e-government services. Libraries are playing a very important role in providing computer access and connecting people to the internet. This is a service that did not exist when most of the libraries in the State were built.

Therefore, on behalf of the Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators, I am asking for your support of the full \$5 million funding for the County Library Capital Project Grants in FY 2011. Your support will help public libraries better meet the educational, reading and research needs of Maryland's children, families, small business owners and others who use our public libraries every day.

Respectfully submitted by
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